

# Congressional Notes



## Know the Rules 900 Number Pay-Per-Call and Other Information Services

### FCC Rules

- Telephone companies cannot disconnect a constituent's local or long distance telephone service for failure to pay charges for 900 number or presubscribed information services.
- If technically feasible, local telephone companies must offer your constituents the option of blocking access to 900 number services.
- A toll-free telephone number may not be used to charge a constituent for information services unless the constituent has a written agreement to obtain and be charged for the service or has agreed to pay for the service by prepaid account, or through a debit, credit, or calling card.
- Toll-free numbers may not be used to initiate collect calls from information providers.
- Callers to toll-free numbers may not be transferred to 900 numbers.
- Charges for 900 and presubscribed information services must be in a portion of the bill that is separate from local and long distance charges. The bill must include information outlining your constituent's rights and responsibilities with respect to payment of information service charges.

### FTC 900 Number Rule

- Advertisements for 900 number services must clearly disclose the cost of a call. Television advertisements must include both audio and video disclosures.
- A preamble must begin each 900 number program if total charges for a call are greater than \$2.00 and must include the following information:
  - ✓ a brief description of the service;
  - ✓ the name of the information service provider;
  - ✓ the cost of the call; and
  - ✓ a statement that callers under 18 must obtain parental permission.

After the preamble is complete, callers must be given three seconds to hang up without being charged for the call.

- Using toll-free numbers for pay-per-call services is prohibited unless the constituent has a presubscription agreement. Also prohibited is transferring toll-free callers to a 900 number.
- Constituents wishing to challenge pay-per-call charges under the FTC's rule must notify the company listed on the bill within 60 days after the first statement containing a disputed charge was sent. Billing statements must include a local or toll-free number to call about pay-per-call charges.